Sláinte Leanaí Éireann
Children's Health Ireland

Molluscum Contagiosum
Information for Parents and Carers

Molluscum Contagiosum (Pox Virus)

This is a common, relatively harmless viral infection that usually develops 2- 8 weeks after becoming infected with the virus. It is characterized by raised, dome-like pearly lesions on the skin that are round, firm and about 2-5 mm across. A tiny dimple often develops on the top of each molluscum.

As the name suggests it spreads easily (is contagious) and can be spread to others by close personal contact with someone who has it or from objects such as shared towels or flannels.

Molluscum is not usually painful but can be unsightly, especially if it occurs in large numbers or on visible areas of the skin. Once one area of skin becomes affected the lesions can spread to other areas.

The average duration of Molluscum is 12-18 months, for some children it can last for up to 36 months.

The average number of Molluscum spots on a child is about 20, although in some cases numbers can be in the hundreds.

Molluscum is more common and extensive in children with eczema or children who are taking immunosuppressive therapy.

Occasionally, they can cause itch, and an eczema-like reaction (redness and scaling) can develop around the area. This can be treated with moisturizer and if itch occurs a 1% hydrocortisone ointment can be used until itch resolves.

The spots can become angry and look as though they are infected. This is often the body's immune response against the virus and can be managed with a little topical antiseptic. A scar is not usually left as the molluscum will resolve spontaneously, but a tiny dent or mark may remain.

Treatment recommended for children is usually to wait and allow it to clear up naturally.
If they are persistent and troublesome other treatments can be used, although these may be uncomfortable for some children. cryotherapy (freezing) and use of topical preparations (creams and ointments). These treatments have a small risk of scaring the skin.

To reduce the chance of passing it on to others, it is advised not to share towels, clothes, soft toys, or bathwater.

If your child is attending a creche / playgroup keep lesions covered with clothing. There is no need to keep your child off school, they can continue their other activities such as swimming.

After an episode of molluscum has cleared away, it is unusual for a child to have the infection again.



https://dermnetnz.org/topics/molluscum

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Approval Date: February 2025 Review Date: February 2028